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# home & garden

The Clinton Chronicle April 24, 2013







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## Scent and sight combine for a stylish home

(ARA) - Whether your home is an expression of clean-lined modernism in stainless steel and glass or a warm and worn harmony of earth tones and antique furnishings, an often-overlooked element of home style is the unseen atmosphere that you breathe. Customizing a unique palette of aromatic style is no less an expression of your personal taste than the selection of wall color, furnishing and fabrics.

More importantly, if you want a home that's toxin-free, you'll want to select home fragrance options carefully, and not choose synthetic commercial options. Synthetic-based home fragrance products like conventional plug-ins, fabric deodorizers and room sprays are often associated with adverse physical reactions and increased chemical sensitivity in humans and pets.

The basic elements of safe and natural aromatic style begin with individual essential oils which are steam distilled

from plants. Essential oils are extracted from roots, woods, resins, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds. Synthetic fragrances, on the other hand, rely on highly concentrated hydrocarbon molecules that are synthesized from non-renewable petroleum.

To get started, try the following essential oils for their note classifications:

\* Middle note essential oils include rose, jasmine, neroli, balsam fir, pine.

\* Top note essential oils include lemon, grapefruit, lavender, eucalyptus, peppermint.

\* Base note essential oils include sandalwood, patchouli, vetiver, cedarwood.

\* Sleek and modern style: Middle note: four drops neroli; top note: six drops eucalyptus; base note: two drops cedarwood.

\* Earthy and natural style: Middle note: Five drops balsam fir; top note: five drops grapefruit; base note: two drops

vetiver.

\* Light and airy style: Middle note: eight drops pine; top note: two drops peppermint; base note: two drops cedarwood.

\* Passion and mystery style: Middle note: three drops jasmine; top note: four drops lemon; base note: five drops patchouli.

Fabric freshening mist

Use this simple, natural option (rather than a chemical cover-up spray) to deodorize your home:

Ingredients:

4 ounces water

24 drops essential oil blend

Directions:

Combine water and oils in a small spray bottle. Shake vigorously and lightly mist curtains and upholstered furnishings.

Candle lamp diffusion

Use a candle lamp diffuser - with an unscented, paraffin-free tea light candle

- to suit your individual decor. This is a much less toxic option than synthetically scented candles.

Ingredients:

1/4 cup water

10 to 12 drops essential oil blend

Directions:

Place water in bowl of diffuser lamp. Add oil. Light candle and warm the liquid to release the aroma. Note: Extinguish candle before bowl burns dry.

Dried botanical diffusion

Create a more complete, natural and toxic-free signature home style by considering the importance of aroma in your home environment. The process of enhancing your home with a one-of-a-kind scent is no less important than selecting the furnishings in your rooms or the finish on your walls and woodwork. Pure essential oils are the natural building blocks of your personal aromatic style and a safer, more unique alternative to products containing chemical fragrance.

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# Pool safety measures for a safer summer

(ARA) - Enjoy the pleasures of home pool ownership and ensure a safer summer for your family by employing a few safety measures around your pool.

One way to do this is to integrate Safer 3, an initiative of the Swim for Life Foundation, which calls for “Safer Water, Safer Kids and Safer Response.”

Swim lessons and supervision lead to safer kids. Having family members take classes in CPR and implementing measures like keeping a portable phone by the pool can help you make a safer response. To ensure safer water, install layers of protection between the home and the pool.

Parents watch their children, especially during the toddler stages, but it's impossible to watch them every second of every day. There are times when a parent is distracted by cooking, doing laundry, checking email, showering or other activities. Many caregivers turn TV or a video on inside the house, and ensure children are watching. But kids get easily distracted, and water draws them like a magnet.

Water safety experts say that safer water is achieved by having layers of protection in place between your home and pool, to buy the time to re-establish contact after a momentary distraction. Studies in areas where isolation fencing is mandatory, such as Western Australia, have proven that isolation fencing with self-closing, self-latching gates



saves lives. Isolation fencing separates the pool from the home, either surrounding the pool or enclosing all doors leading from the home, to prevent children who get out the door from traveling beyond the patio. For above-ground pools, a smaller fence and gate surrounding the steps or ladder can prevent toddler access.

“If a child gains unauthorized access to a pool and drowns, it's a terrible tragedy,” says D&D Technologies' Senior Vice President Jim Paterson. “It can also be a liability issue when the injured

party is a visitor. You can improve the safety and security of your pool or spa with isolation fencing with self-closing, self-latching gate hardware.

“D&D's MagnaLatch is the No. 1 selling child safety gate latch in the world,” Paterson adds. “Unlike common gravity latches, MagnaLatch has a built-in key lock, eliminating the need for a separate padlock. It won't jam, is self-latching and vertically and horizontally adjustable. Our gate hardware is formed of super-strong engineering polymers with stainless steel components, so it won't rust - ever, and it carries a limited lifetime warranty. With TruClose hinges, no external closing spring is required, and the homeowner can easily adjust hinge tension after installation with a screwdriver.”

Paterson notes that rust-free gate hardware is now available under the Stanley or National Hardware brand through select stores or online at [www.lowes.com](http://www.lowes.com), and through other hardware retailers or fencing professionals. The hinges and latches are simple to install and most models offer vertical and horizontal adjustment to correct gate misalignment caused by ground movement, children swinging on gates or other factors.

Pool barrier codes require pool gates to be self-closing and self-latching, and to open away from the pool. D&D has two lockable MagnaLatch styles so the release can be mounted at the code-re-

quired height, typically 54 or 60 inches above the ground. Consult your building department for local regulations.

Pool safety advocacy groups like the National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA) recommend that homeowners utilize several layers of protection so they can experience the pleasures of swimming pools and feel an added degree of assurance that their children, grandchildren and visitors will be safe.

The dangers of suction drain entrapment are also significant, and anti-entrapment drain covers should be in place. Pool professionals should be consulted to ensure the correct suction entrapment prevention devices are used.

Both the Safer 3 and the NDPA recommend that a “water watcher” be designated for safety when children are in the pool, to maintain eye-to-eye contact at all times.

Toys or floating chlorine dispensers that look like toys should never be left in the pool area.

“With isolation fencing and the Safer 3 in place, your family can look forward to years of relaxation and enjoyment of your pool,” Paterson says.

For more information, visit [www.ddtechglobal.com](http://www.ddtechglobal.com) or [www.ndpa.org](http://www.ndpa.org). For a free Pool Safety Kit call (800) 716-0888, ext. 292, or email [info@ddtechusa.com](mailto:info@ddtechusa.com).

## Tips to prevent insects and termites from attacking

(StatePoint) This spring and summer, your home could be under attack by termites, known as “silent destroyers” because of their ability to quickly and quietly cause serious property damage. As the temperature increases, so does the potential for termite swarms and infestations by other insects seeking to chew up your home and its value.

In fact, according to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), termites cause more than \$5 billion in property damage each year all across the country. What's worse is that damage caused by these wood-destroying insects is typically not covered by homeowners' insurance policies.

“No matter where you live, wood destroying insects pose serious property risks and can seriously compromise the structural stability of a home. Homeowners need to regularly inspect their

homes, as these hungry pests typically remain hidden until damage to your house becomes visible,” says Missy Henriksen, Vice President of Public Affairs for the NPMA.

The key to preventing pests from attacking your home is to eliminate their access to food, water and shelter:

- \* Carefully inspect the perimeter of your home for rotting wood, mud tubes or a visible termite presence. Be vigilant!
- \* Eliminate any sources of moisture or standing water, as water attracts termites and other insects.
- \* Divert water away from your property through properly-functioning downspouts, gutters and splash blocks.
- \* Seal cracks and small openings along your house's foundation, and screen windows and doors.
- \* Keep tree branches and other plants cut back from the house.



- \* Keep kitchens clean by wiping counters and emptying the garbage frequently.
- \* Keep all food containers sealed and avoid leaving pet food dishes out for long periods of time.

\* Keep trash containers clean and sealed, both indoors and outdoors.

\* Do not stack firewood or lumber near your home, and inspect it carefully before bringing it indoors.

\* If your home is newly constructed, remove old form boards and grade stakes left behind.

\* If you see signs of an insect or termite infestation, contact a licensed pest professional promptly to treat it.

For more tips on seasonal pests, visit [www.PestWorld.org](http://www.PestWorld.org), where you also can use the site's “Find a Pro” zip code locator if you have a problem that needs professional help.

“Remember, a termite colony can chew 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so if you see signs of a problem move quickly to contact a pest professional to eliminate it,” urges Henriksen.

By Vic MacDonald

For Home & Garden 2013

Brilliant bursts of colored flowers and the relaxing summertime cookout have their “roots” in the work of Clinton High School students and teachers.

The Agriculture Education classes are selling plants from the school's greenhouse, dedicated last spring. The shop class at CHS has built 6-foot picnic tables, selling the backyard fixture for \$125.

With classes winding down for the summer, the picnic tables might have to be an “on-order” item. But it's never too early to start planning for next spring and summer's “backyard makeover”.

“There is nothing like having a picnic on a bright sunny day. What better way to enjoy a meal outdoors, than to have your very own picnic table?” says a promotion on the CHS website. “Are you looking for a durable picnic table to share dinner on those warm spring evenings? If so, you are in luck.”

Contact Todd Frazier at Clinton High - 833-1962 or [ktfrazier@laurrens56.k12.sc.us](mailto:ktfrazier@laurrens56.k12.sc.us) - for more information.

Meanwhile, the agriculture students will continue doing their part to make Clinton and the surrounding area explode in spring and summer colors.

They are selling plants from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day this week, and on Saturday, April 27.



doors,” Vaughan said as the students were rewarded with a visit by an ice cream truck for their work at Hospice of Laurens County.

This Saturday's plant sale at the CHS greenhouse will be from 9 a.m. to noon. The revised list of bedding plants, vegetables and herbs for sale is:

Bedding Plants  
Wandering Jew, \$10 hanging baskets;  
Zonal Geranium, \$12 hanging baskets;  
Petunia Spreading, \$14 for flats of 15;  
Begonia Tuberous, \$4 per quart pot;  
Dusty Miller Silver Dust, \$2 per quart pot;  
Swedish Ivy, \$12 hanging baskets;  
Ver-

Marigold Inca, and Zinnia Dreamland Mix, all \$14 for 32-count tray; and Purple Heart, \$4. Vegetables and Herbs

benas, \$14 for tray of 18;  
Scaevola Brilliant, \$4 per quart pot;  
Bacopa Scopia, \$10 hanging baskets;  
Gerbera Daisy, \$4;  
Coleus Wizard Mix Select, \$1 each or tray of 18 for \$14;  
Lantana, \$3 or \$40 for tray of 15;  
Ferns, \$14, large \$20;  
Impatiens, Salvia splendens,

Rosemary Tuscan Blue and Lavender, \$3 each;  
Basil Nufar, \$3;  
Tomato Lemon Boy, Sweet 100, Celebrity, Brandywine Red, Better Boy, and Pepper Cayenne, California Wonder, Jalapeno and Sweet Banana, all \$14 per tray of 36, \$3 per 6 pack, or 75 cents per plant.

The shop class also makes wooden posts with hangars for hanging plants. One of their creations was a gift to Mundy Woodruff, owner/operator of Fatz Food & Drinkz, Clinton, when he was keynote speaker for the Highway to High Pay college-prep conference in March at Clinton High School.





# Bricks build houses; also hope for Hospice

By Vic MacDonald  
For Home & Garden 2013

Bricks build. Their purpose is to set the foundation under houses and to provide the outside shell for buildings.

Drive by construction sites, and you can see brick-layers working to set the foundation, and sometimes making permanent signage for businesses.

Bricks built Hospice House, a patient care and family-friendly wing of Hospice of Laurens County. The facility in Clinton has provided end-of-life services for a quarter century.

The Hospice House Gardens, tucked tightly to the side of the building across from PC's Bailey Memorial Stadium, is a place where families of hospice patients can go for meditation. When Hospice has vespers in its chapel, the garden shines right outside the window.



**Remembering loved ones and caregivers.** The Pathway of Remembrance in Hospice House Garden is a remembrance project for loved ones, their caregivers and special times. "In our minds, (the garden) belongs to the community," said Dan Compton, chaplain, Hospice of Laurens County. - Photo by Vic MacDonald

"In our minds," Hospice of Laurens County Chaplain Dan Compton said, "that belongs to the community."

A landscaping and maintenance company keeps the garden, and the Laurens County Master Gardeners have provided advice about its development. Agriculture education students from Clinton High recently performed the "many-hands" tasks that prepared the garden for spring.

Young people come there to take prom pictures. The garden has been the setting for four weddings and receptions, all for Hospice-associated families. "It has been used for multiple purposes, but mostly it is a meditation garden," Compton said.

In addition to a swing, fish pond and planting areas - "it's just about to break out in full bloom," Compton said - a brick pathway flows through Hospice House Garden.

Along this pathway, families pay homage to their loved ones and the caregivers who made their relatives' end-of-life experiences as comfortable as possible.

The Pathway of Remembrance donate-a-brick project is an on-going effort of Hospice of Laurens County. Compton said it is not "a campaign" but, rather, a continually offered way for people to pay tribute to anyone.

For a gift of \$250 or more, a 4-inch by 8-inch brick is inscribed and placed along the pathway. Compton said 140-150 bricks are in place or in the process of being laid along the pathway.

Compton tells a story related to giving opportunities for Hospice of Laurens County in a meditation entitled "Treasures in Heaven" on the Hospice website ().

Two benefits for Hospice are upcoming: May 19, 10th annual butterfly release program at Thornwell Home of Children, and August 24 Flight of the Dove bicycle ride through Laurens and adjoining counties beginning and ending at Bailey Memorial Stadium.

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# This laundry tip will help you have lower bills

(ARA) - If you do your own laundry, pay for detergent, or simply like clean clothes, here is a quick quiz. What is the most important factor in removing stains?

a. - Amount of detergent.  
b. - Water temperature.  
c. - Water softness.

If you said, "c, water softness," congratulations. You know your laundry, and perhaps your water. Reduction of water hardness was up to 100 times more effective at stain removal than increasing detergent dose or washing with hotter water, according to a March 2011 study by Scientific Services S/D on behalf of the Water Quality Research Foundation.

Everyone has seen ads touting the cleaning power of this or that detergent, but many don't realize the dissolved mineral count in their water has a much greater effect. Water with a high mineral count, particularly calcium and magnesium, is called "hard," and is prevalent in most of the United States. "Soft" water has a lower mineral count.

"The study shows that if you soften your water, you can use half the detergent and switch from hot to cold water and still get better stain removal," says Pauli Undesser, director of regulatory and technical affairs at the Water Quality Association. "In other words, softened water gives you cleaner laundry while saving you money and reducing your carbon footprint."

The study examined water treated by salt-regenerated water softeners, the most popular and effective water softening systems available. Undesser says the Water Quality Association considers magnetic water treatment devices to be anti-scaling devices rather than water softeners because they do not remove hard minerals as water softeners do.

The study quantifies what hotels and other high-volume laundrers have known for years - reducing minerals with a water softening system creates more lather while leaving fabrics visibly cleaner and softer to the touch. Softened water also requires less detergent, meaning fewer toxic chemicals for the environment. From a budgeting perspective, using less detergent and energy can add up to real savings, not only for hotels, but for families and individuals as well.

The study adds more data to a laundry list of benefits for softened water. Another 2011 study conducted for the Water Quality Research Foundation assessed the impact of water hardness on automatic dishwashers, finding a similar effect in the kitchen as was observed in



the laundry room.

Softening water was up to 12 times more effective at cleaning dishes than increasing detergent dose. "Put another way, you can achieve a 70 percent savings in detergent and still maintain the same soil removal from your dishes and glasses," Undesser says.

The dishwashing study may have uncovered yet another benefit: Softened

water appears to help dishes dry better in air - a practice that saves more energy and money when compared to drying with heat in a dishwasher. More research needs to be done to measure the savings and environmental impact.

These studies follow a 2010 study that showed water softeners can save significant amounts of money and energy. Conducted by the Battelle Memorial Institute, the study found hard water can make water heaters lose up to 48 percent of their energy efficiency. It also found hard water rapidly leads to clogged showerheads.

The U.S. Geological Survey has calculated that more than 85 percent of U.S. groundwater is hard. Many municipal water systems treat hard water, but consumers may want to have their water tested at home to determine if softening's benefits makes sense for them.

Do-it-yourself water testing kits are available at most hardware stores, or you can have a water treatment professional do the testing. The Water Quality Association has a web page enabling searches by company name, state or zip code. For more information on water softening, see [water-softening.org](http://water-softening.org).



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# Rethink-refinish-redecorate hardwood floors

(ARA) - Don't look down on your hardwood floors just because they're old and you want a new look underfoot. Your existing hardwoods can be the foundation, literally, of a fresh new decorating scheme anywhere in your home. In addition to saving time and money, you're also sparing Mother Earth when you don't choke landfills with wood that's still perfectly good and usable.

"Hardwood floors are so naturally durable and wear-resistant they can go on looking beautiful for years," says Linda Jovanovich of the American Hardwood Information Center. "But when you're ready for a 'fresh' look, remember that there's a new decorative role for that 'old' hardwood flooring." American Hardwoods, treasured for generations - top interior designers agree.

In Redondo Beach, Calif., designer Jackie Balint has customized old wood floors with floral patterns hand-painted to match the homeowner's favorite plates. In Lexington, Ky., kitchen designer Laura Dalzell used contrasting stain colors to create checkerboards and borders on traditional hardwood floors. New York designer John Buscarello swears by faux-painted finishes like checkerboards and pretend parquet. And Arizona designer Karen Wirrig uses a unique glazing process that wins a floor prize for special effects.

To revitalize old oak floors in a client's California home, Wirrig worked with a master cabinet contractor who repurposed his custom cabinet-glazing techniques from furniture to the floors.

"I have to admit I was skeptical," Wirrig says. But when the glaze was applied over the sanded and stained floor, the grain was enhanced and the "old" floors looked seamless. "The individual planks receded visually, giving the floor a much more continuous look," she reports. "It's a rich and elegantly rustic look, just what the homeowner had in mind."

Manhattan designer Buscarello believes in bypassing the demolition crew in favor of a decorative painter. For him, it's all about cherishing the old wood and the patina it develops over time.

"Designers really covet old floors," Buscarello. "Old wood is different; it has a beauty that's hard to replicate. Unless it's really too worn to refinish - and that rarely happens - there's no point in tearing out an old floor."

Buscarello likes to refresh old floors instead, sometimes with just a gentle



cleaning process called "screening" that merely lifts the dirt and old wax from the surface of the wood. It doesn't change the color of the wood itself, which can then be re-waxed or polyurethaned to look like new.

When he wants a more dramatic transformation, Buscarello calls for painted designs - classic floor treatments that "will never go out of fashion," he says - not only in casual country-style rooms but also in sophisticated contemporary settings.

Like the time his work crew pulled up 20-year-old linoleum in a Manhattan apartment foyer, revealing splendid hardwood flooring underneath. Buscarello had a decorative artist paint a crisp black-and-white checkerboard on the floor, instantly brightening the entry, delighting the homeowner and leaving enough in the budget for extra decorating projects.

Even Park Avenue-posh clients appreciate the classic good looks (and budget-loving price tag) of faux-painted floors. Buscarello made a grand Park Avenue apartment "even grander" with faux painting on the half-century-old floors - a pattern that looks like warm Old World parquet running diagonally throughout all the elegant upfront rooms. "Everyone has a budget," the designer points out. "You can save thousands by refurbishing existing

hardwood."

Drama is what New York designer

Darren Henault has in mind when he sets out to renew a worn wood floor. Over the top and ultra-bold, Henault loves pattern on wood floors, a message visitors got twice-over at the most recent Kips Bay Decorator Show House in Manhattan.

Henault floored adjoining sitting rooms - "His 'n Hers" - with intricate entwined patterns lifted from an adjacent carpet and stencil-painted on the maple floors. "His" was darker and touched with ebony; "Hers," the reverse, painted in milky white and lavender to match the walls. "Every surface is an opportunity to do something dramatic," the designer believes. "Especially a hardwood floor."

Design pros across the U.S. agree. Don't show your hardwood floor the door. Simply refresh, renew and redecorate to make hardwood floors look new and stylish again.

For DIY tips about painting on hardwood floors, and other decorating tips and suggestions, visit [www.Hardwood-Info.com](http://www.Hardwood-Info.com), the American Hardwood Information Center.



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### "Greening Up" Clinton

Thornwell Home for Children is doing its part to make Clinton a greener place to live. On March 23 and 30, the residential care facility for at-risk youths sold the "wares" from its greenhouse to area gardeners as a fund-raiser. Heavy springtime rain on March 23 dampens the sales event, but the weather March 30 was much better - Thornwell youths and staff even hosed off the winter grime from vehicles during a benefit car wash. The annual plant sale made available 5,000 seedlings of nearly 50 varieties of organic and generic vegetables using the existing greenhouse at Thornwell. The idea for a benefit plant sale was spearheaded by Dr. Robert Gallagher, an independent agricultural consultant. Thornwell also is nurturing a program of cottage-based garden sites for the young people living there to raise some of their own food. A plant-sale announcement said, "The Thornwell children have loved getting their 'hands dirty' planting and cultivating the plants and learning about greener living. The whole process has been an amazing educational opportunity for the cottage families in home-based vegetable production."

- Photos by Vic MacDonald







**Electric cooperatives magazine advises insulating for efficiency**  
The “spring and summer travel guide” in South Carolina Living magazine includes in addition to sights and sounds of spring and early summer around the state, some practical advice about home insulation.

Laurens Electric Cooperative is part of the magazine’s “Power for Life” articles, and its Co-op Connection section provides interesting news from electric utilities that are part of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina.

Laurens Electric Co-op’s section says that Laurens 55 High School juniors Kevin Dean and Melody Wright are delegates to the 2013 Washington Youth Tour. Dean and Wright will be among more than 1,400 students visiting legislators and seeing the historic sights of the nation’s

capital in June.

Also, Laurens Co-op member and Whitmire Community School teacher Kim Neal will be a chaperone, the publication says.

The April issue also has advice for preventing hazards from trees and includes a gardening article entitled “Pest alert: Rose rosette virus” (SC Gardener by S. Cory Tanner, Clemson Extension, Greenville County).

In its Energy Q&A section, author Jim Dulley provides practical advice about insulating the cracks and gaps in a house to improve energy efficiency.

The article says homeowners should seal cracks around recessed canister lights so air flow is reduced, and look at the rim joint for heat loss in a house’s foundation.

Check for air leakage spots, the article

advises:

- At lumber-meets-foundation points;
- At outlet and switch boxes, especially along outside walls;
- At holes put in place for fans and light fixtures installations; and
- At molding for doors and windows framing.

Checking the depth of blown-in insulation is a tip provides in the article. Attic vents create wind, and that can blow the insulation into high and low points. Also, blown-in insulation settles, so it might not be the correct depth for maximum energy efficiency.

Use a urethane foam spray can to put expanding foam into outlets and switches after removing the faceplate. Of course, cut the power to outlets by shutting off the circuit breaker.

Improve the seal by adding foam draft

sealers behind faceplates.

Replace older canister-style ceiling lights with newer models, which have seals.

Check ceiling fans; those installed after the house’s construction might need caulking around the hole for the wiring and coverage with more insulation.

Fiberglass wall insulation batts can be cut into short lengths that can be used to insulate the area where the sill plate connects with the rim joist, the article advises.

Using a can of urethane foam insulation can provide additional air leakage in the area between the sill plate and the foundation wall.

(Questions can be sent to Energy Q&A at South Carolina Living, 808 Knox Abbott Dr., Cayce, SC 29033; , or by fax, 803-739-3041.)

# Extending your home’s living space outdoors

(StatePoint) It doesn’t matter if your backyard is a tiny patch of grass or an expansive green lawn. You can extend your home’s living spaces by creating an inviting outdoor room for relaxing, dining, entertaining and even cooking.

Outdoor living rooms are a booming trend in home design, representing a creative way to expand your home’s living areas. And they add value to your home, with homebuyers ranking such outdoor spaces fifth on their top ten list of must-have home features, according to an annual survey by Avid Ratings Co.

These days it’s no longer about a simple picnic table on a patio or deck. There are many ways to create the right ambience — from cozy seating areas to outdoor fireplaces to full outdoor kitchens.

\* Perfect Lighting: Affordable outdoor lights can do more than just illuminate pathways and steps for safety. Get creative with up-lighting at the base of trees, plants or structures to provide a dramatic glow. Or opt for warm portable lights that enhance your space’s mood.

\* On the Floor: Between tiles, wood



paneling, carpeting and area rugs, there are a myriad of flooring choices for your home’s interior. The same is now true outdoors. Decks and patios come in all shapes, sizes, and surfaces.

Depending on your surrounding environment, everything from slate tiles to wood planks can do the trick. But even something as simple as an outdoor rug can define your outdoor room.

\* Around the Fireplace: What better way to bring people together outdoors than a warm, crackling fireplace?

Choose one with stainless steel construction, built to handle the rigors of the elements. Different fireplaces offer different features, such as the Merit Plus which sports a traditional design, or the Oasis LS0-43 which boasts one of the largest viewing areas to watch those flames. You even can opt for the convenience of gas models, such as the Lennox Elite Series, which is ventless and requires no chimney.

A hearth easily serves as a centerpiece around which to arrange outdoor

furniture. Its radiant heat also allows you to continue enjoying your space during cooler months.

\* Outdoor Kitchens: Kitchens aren’t just for indoors. Many upscale appliances are available for outdoor installation. While barbecue grills are fine by themselves, gas-powered stoves, outdoor rotisseries, burners and granite countertops also help homeowners get in touch with their inner and outdoor chef.

“By extending your home’s living spaces to the great outdoors with comfy seating and an outdoor fireplace or kitchen, you can give your friends and family more space to enjoy while increasing your house’s resale value,” says Robert Dischner, director of marketing for Lennox Hearth Products.

For more information on outdoor home enhancements, visit [www.lennox.com](http://www.lennox.com).

Regardless of the direction you choose, you have the option of starting small and adding elements over time. A cozy seating area can grow into an open-air kitchen and living room.



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# Mowing tips to keep lawn looking good

(ARA) - Every homeowner dreams of that perfect lawn, but the fact is maintaining a green and lush carpet of grass takes some work. One of the easiest ways to keep up the appearance of your lawn is to mow it in a way that promotes optimal lawn health.

In fact, mowing frequently is one of the best ways to maintain the health of your lawn according to the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Ideally, you should own a mower that allows you to mow frequently and efficiently.

If you have a smaller yard, a walking mower may do the trick, especially if you can get the job done in a half hour or less. If you measure your lawn in acres, as opposed to square feet, a riding mower is probably more appropriate. But most people have a lawn that fits somewhere in between, in which case, there's another option.

Cross mowers are smaller riding mowers that are designed for yards up to one acre. With a compact design, these mowers offer increased maneuverability, as well as easy storage. Among the companies offering cross mowers is Weed Eater, which features a SmartCut model.

Whether now is the time to rightsize your mower or not, here are some other mowing tips to keep your lawn looking good all year:

- \* Keep your blade sharp. A dull blade can damage your grass, hampering healthy and even growth. Mower blades should typically be sharpened once at the beginning of spring and once in the summer. Examining your grass after you mow can help determine whether your blade is producing a clean and even cut.
- \* Spread clippings evenly throughout your yard. Grass clippings are your best form of fertilizer - and they're free. Throughout the year, your clippings will provide the equivalent of one or two applications of fertilizer, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- If your mower discharges clippings to the side, mow the outer edge so clippings are thrown toward the middle of

your yard, and as you move toward the center, change your direction so they are thrown outward. Sweeping any clippings that ended up on your driveway or sidewalks back onto the lawn both promotes the health of your lawn and prevents them from entering local waterways - grass clippings can contribute to toxic levels of phosphorus in lakes and rivers.

- \* Don't mow in the same direction every time. Mowing in different directions will prevent your grass from becoming matted down and instead keep it growing upward, where it can receive the most sunlight.
- \* Cut your grass between 2 and 3 inches. Keeping it longer than 2 inches can help prevent weeds from receiving the necessary sunlight to take hold. It also can prevent scorching during warm and dry weather. For optimal growth and regeneration, never remove more than one third of your lawn's length during one mowing session.
- \* Mow only when your grass is dry. Mowing when your yard is wet can cause your mower to leave tracks. It can also cause your discarded clippings to clump together, providing an ideal breeding ground for bacteria that can cause disease in your grass.

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Above: Clinton High School ag class at Hospice of Laurens County. Left: a garden scene at Hospice of Laurens County.



Lawn Renewal and Renovation Tips to Create a Perfect Lawn this Season  
Gardening expert Melinda Myers shares simple steps for invigorating lawns

The extreme heat and drought of 2012 was hard on lawns and gardens. "Many gardeners are facing a blank slate of bare soil, masses of dead patches that were once lawn or a bit of grass interspersed in a sea of weeds," says gardening expert Melinda Myers.

Myers recommends following these steps to improve lawns this season.

Start this spring to renovate or improve your weather-worn lawn. Remember that water is critical to get newly seeded and sodded lawns to survive. So be prepared to help nature along with the recovery effort.

Evaluate the damage. Then use the check list below to find the best course of action to aid the ailing lawn.

If the lawn is more than 60 percent weeds or bare soil, it's probably time to start over. Use this opportunity to create a great foundation for growing a healthy lawn. Kill off the existing vegetation, add several inches of organic matter such as compost or peat moss and a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer into the top 6 to 8 inches of soil, and rake smooth.

Select more drought tolerant grasses like rhizomatous (turf-type) tall fescues, buffalo grass, and Habiturf® native lawn mix. Make sure the grass is suited to the climate and plant according to the label. Then sow the seeds, lightly rake and mulch or lay sod. Water often enough to keep the soil moist until the seeds sprout or the sod roots into the soil below. Then water thoroughly when the top few inches of soil are crumbly, but slightly moist to encourage deep roots.

Fertilize new, existing and stressed

lawns with a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer like Milorganite. It won't harm stressed lawns, young seedlings or newly laid sod. It will encourage slow steady growth. Southern lawns can be fertilized in April and again in early June. In the north fertilize around Memorial Day. And if 2013 turns into another hot dry summer, it won't burn the lawn.

Mow high to encourage deeply rooted grass that is more drought tolerant and pest resistant. And mow often, removing only a third of the total height. Be sure to leave these short clippings on the lawn. They return moisture, nutrients, and organic matter to the soil.

Repair small dead and bare patches as needed. Use a lawn patch kit, grass seed and mulch. For small spots, loosen the soil surface, sprinkle grass seed and lightly rake. Or mix a handful of grass seed in a bucket of topsoil. Sprinkle the mix over the soil surface.

Do a bit more soil preparation when renovating larger dead areas in the lawn. Remove or kill any weeds that have filled in these areas. Till two inches of compost, peat moss or other organic matter into the top six inches of soil. Sow seed, rake and mulch or lay sod.

Overseed thin and sparse lawn. First, core aerate the lawn to improve soil conditions and increase seed-to-soil contact. Spread grass seed over the aerated lawn and water as needed. Or rent a slit seeder or hire a professional with this type of equip-

"South Carolina Living" magazine advises: Properly installed shades are one of the easiest ways to improve the energy efficiency of windows. Lower them during summer to keep your home cooler. In winter, raise shades during the day and lower them at night on south-facing windows. Dual shades, with reflective white coating on one side and a heat-absorbing dark color on the other, can be reversed with the seasons and save even more energy. - Source: US Department of Energy, learn more at [energysavers.gov](http://energysavers.gov)

ment. These machines slice through the soil and drop the grass seed in place, increasing the seed-to-soil contact which is needed for good germination.

Core aerate lawns that have more than one half an inch of thatch, those growing in compacted soils, or before overseeding. By removing plugs of soil you break through the thatch and create channels for water and fertilizer to reach the grass roots.

Spot treat weeds on lawns that need minimal repair. Wait at least until fall to treat new and overseeded lawns. Spot treating minimizes the use of chemicals and reduces the stress on already stressed lawns. As always read and follow label directions carefully.

Proper maintenance and a bit of cooperation from nature will help transform a lawn from an eyesore to an asset in the landscape.

Gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening and The Lawn Guide – Midwest Series. She hosts the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment segments, is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and has a column in Gardening How-to magazine. Myers has a master's degree in horticulture, is a certified arborist and was a horticulture instructor with tenure. Her web site is [www.melindamyers.com](http://www.melindamyers.com)



# Roof colors are being held hostage

KANSAS CITY, Kan. - Across America, one in four homeowners\* is restricted from updating the exterior colors on their homes by rules imposed by their local homeowners association.

According to the 2011 DaVinci Roofscapes' Homeowners Exterior Preferences Study, 26 percent of homeowners, whose home exterior color is not their dream color and says there is something that prevents them from changing it, indicate they are stopped from adding their dream color to their house exterior by covenants imposed by their homeowner's organization.

"Basically, colors are being held hostage by local communities in an effort to create conformity rather than individuality," says Kate Smith, chief color maven and president of Sensational Color.

"While cost was also identified as a major factor in preventing people from updating their homes with their ideal colors, that's less of a concern to me. Generally, people can save up to make

home improvements and will aspire to make color changes. However, if they're 100 percent restricted from making these changes by their local homeowner's association, then they may never have the chance to create a home exterior that they truly love."

**Home Exterior Palette**

The same nationwide consumer study, conducted online by Harris Interactive(c), also shows that when house hunting or designing their own home, the most attention-grabbing exterior feature was the style of the home, followed by how the home looked on the property. One in five homeowners mentioned the fact that they were pleased to be able to have some input into the design of their home's exterior during the house hunting or design process.

"A house's exterior is an open palette for homeowners," says Smith. "There's a growing trend of looking at the house from the 'top down' to add color and accents that personalize the home to more fully reflect the homeowner's personal style.

"Starting with a roof color or blend of colors sets the stage for the entire home. People then look at their siding, windows, doors and trim to create an eye-catching exterior that they feel a connection with. When the ability to add your favorite colors on the home's exterior is hampered by local homeowner restrictions, then people may accept and even 'like' their home's exterior but I believe they'll never truly embrace the home."

To help homeowners understand more about exterior color selections, Smith has partnered with DaVinci Roofscapes(r) to offer the free "FRESH Home Exterior Colors" guide available at <http://davinciroofscapes.com/color-studio.php>. The easy-to-read 30-page downloadable guide helps homeowners choose color palettes that complement the exterior of the home and the main features of the house. The DaVinci Color Studio also offers an interactive advice component with a Smith, the ability to create custom roof blends using any of

DaVinci's 49 roofing colors and a masterpiece gallery showcasing different home styles and exteriors.

For more details on color selection for the home from Kate Smith, visit the Sensational Color website at [www.sensationalcolor.com](http://www.sensationalcolor.com).

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# Tips to make your residence home sweet home

(ARA) - Are lower real estate values keeping you in your current home - even though you were hoping to upgrade? Or, maybe you can't bear the thought of boxing up all your belongings to move? You're not alone. More homeowners are staying in their current homes, but remodeling with the idea of improving their quality of life and adding more "live-in value," according to recent research from Consumer Reports.

No matter what your reason for staying put, rest assured; you don't have to move to get the home of your dreams ... just make a few home improvements.

Ooh la la kitchen

Today's kitchens are no longer a place to simply cook and eat. Your kitchen is the "real" living room - for living, working and entertaining - and the ideal room to improve for added enjoyment.

One project to improve your home and "live-in value" is installing a multilevel kitchen island. Not only does this provide an extra work area, but also an informal place for entertaining guests. Central island cooktops and sinks are another op-

tion, keeping cooking and clean-up areas within easy reach.

Tying the overall look of the kitchen together will also help to make a style statement you can live with for years to come. Upgrading to stainless steel appliances is a common choice, especially with the latest technologies - such as built-in flat screen televisions or computers on refrigerators - all with a beautiful high-end finish.

Fashionable faucets

Just think of how much time you spend at the sink, from rinsing fruits and vegetables to filling pots and washing hands and dishes. So why not update this kitchen focal point with a new functional and fashionable faucet? High-arc models with pull-out spouts are the most ideal since they allow ample room to fill or clean large pots and pans. Models with multifunction sprays are helpful when washing delicate fruits.

Once you've found a model with these useful features, don't forget about style. Designer finishes, such as stainless steel will give your kitchen a professional look.

And, for a designer look that maintains the beauty and brilliance of the faucet's finish in between cleanings, try Moen's Renzo pullout kitchen faucet with Spot Resist Stainless finish. This unique finish does just what it says - resists fingerprints and water spots. Moen's Renzo kitchen faucet is available at Lowe's.

Storage space explosion

No matter the square footage of your home, accumulating belongings over the years contributes to a lack of storage space. Try to solve this issue by first purging items that you haven't used within the past six months. Next, you can organize your necessities with a variety of storage systems - from drawer organizers to storage bins. And, if it seems like a task that you can't handle on your own, hire a company that specializes in organization, such as Closet World, to create a custom-designed solution.

Spa-tacular and sensible baths

Today's baths have evolved from a task-oriented room to become a private spa. Luckily it's simple to turn your bath into a private sanctuary. To start, update

your current showerhead with a more luxurious and functional design. If you prefer a powerful, full-body spray, perhaps you'd like a rainshower showerhead. Or, if you like options, try a multi-function version that allows you to switch from a relaxing wide spray to an invigorating concentrated spray - or somewhere in the middle. You can find a variety of designs and finishes at your local home improvement store, such as Lowe's.

And, as in the kitchen, the faucet is a focal point in the small space. Update your current faucet with a new designer style and finish ... and with water-saving benefits. Faucets account for approximately 15 percent of indoor household water use - more than 1 trillion gallons across the U.S. each year - so once you've found the perfect look, be sure that you choose one that is certified to meet WaterSense criteria.

With these few home improvements you can start recouping your "live-in value" and make your current residence a home sweet home.

## Get your deck ready for the season

(StatePoint) Before family and friends take to your deck or patio for barbecues, parties and other seasonal fun, you need to make sure it's safe and in good shape.

While the outdoors can be terrific for fun and relaxation, the elements can wreak havoc on decks, causing old or unprotected wood to warp, crack and grow mold or mildew. And age, moisture and wind can cause railings, flooring or steps to loosen.

It's time to inspect your deck or patio and get it in shape.

Safety First

Inspect your deck, patio or porch for split or rotting wood, loose railings or handrails, and damaged support beams and planking. Repair any structural damage. Replace or hammer in nails or tighten loose screws, bolts and spindles. You'll also want to check outdoor benches, chairs, tables and planters to make sure they are stable.

Apply Protection

The wood on your deck has many small pores that can fill with water and dirt, causing warping, discoloration and splintering. Mold and mildew also can break down structural integrity. First,



**Make sure your deck is safe, clean and looking good.**

give your deck a facelift by cleaning it with a suitable deck cleaner. Then protect it with a high-quality stain.

Beware Of Grills

Everything you put on your deck can affect it. Your grill can drip grease, staining or eroding your deck's finish. Position grills carefully, placing a hard rubber mat beneath them. Also be mindful of welcome mats.

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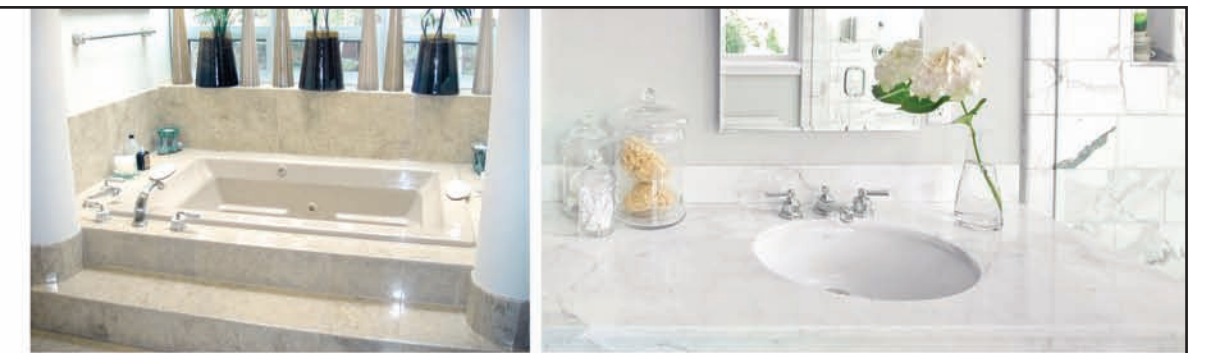
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